

Remarks at a Reception for Gubernatorial Candidate Barbara B. Kennelly in Westport, Connecticut

June 8, 1998

The President. Thank you. Thank you very much. Let me first thank Martha Stewart for having us here. I had a wonderful time going through this wonderful enterprise, and I love the food. And I know it's all supposed to be light, but if you eat enough of it, it's still—[*laughter*]*—it was a wonderful, wonderful lunch.*

I think of the great following Martha has throughout the country; there's no telling how much she's broadened my base today by giving me a chance to come here. [*Laughter*] There will be millions of people listening to me that never paid any attention to me before, just because I came here today. And I'm very grateful. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank two Members of the United States Congress from Connecticut, who are not up on this platform but are out in the crowd, for being here today and for their service for you and our Nation, Congressman Maloney and Congressman Rosa DeLauro. Thank you for being here, so much, thank you. I thank our Democratic Party chair, Ed Marcus; your great attorney general and my old classmate and long-time friend, Richard Blumenthal, I thank him.

You all know I owe Connecticut a great deal. I mean, I came to law school here; I met Hillary here; I worked in Joe Duffy's campaign in 1970 and did a little work for Joe Lieberman. I've made friends that are still friends of mine forever. I actually have known both your Senators now for nearly 30 years. I knew them when all three of us were young, ungray—and frankly, most of our friends would have been astonished to know how any of us turned out. [*Laughter*] And being friends with them has been a great experience. I've loved in later years being—especially, serving with Joe Lieberman in the Democratic Leadership Council. You all know how grateful I am to Senator Dodd for chairing our Democratic Party at a particularly challenging time. I also appreciate the fact that Chris Dodd will still play golf with me, since Barbara Kennelly no longer has time to play golf with me. [*Laughter*] So I'm very thankful for that.

I'm going to tell you a story today. I'm going to do something highly impolitic involving Bar-

bara Kennelly. This is impolitic but, as God as my witness, it is true. Last summer Barbara Kennelly called me, and she said, "I want to talk to you about running for Governor." I said, "Okay." I said, "Do you want me to tell you what you want to hear, or do you want me to be honest with you?" She said, "I want you to be honest with me; we've been friends a long time." So Barbara Kennelly came to Martha's Vineyard, where Hillary and Chelsea and I were on vacation, and we went out and played golf together, and then Barbara and her son came and had dinner with Hillary and me that night. And we talked about this. And I said, "Barbara, I was Governor for 12 years, and I loved it. A lot of people thought I ran for President because I was bored being Governor. I was happier on the day I left than the day I showed up. [*Laughter*] I loved the job."

But I said, "It is almost an unwritten rule of American politics that if the economy is good, you can't beat an incumbent Governor unless he does something real dumb." You've virtually got to have a lobotomy, and you can still get reelected if the economy is good if you're Governor—no offense to Governor Rowland, I didn't mean that he had. [*Laughter*] I didn't mean that. I didn't mean that. [*Laughter*] No, I didn't mean that. No, I'm serious, I didn't mean that. I told her the truth. I said, "This is like rolling a rock up a hill, if the economy is good."

But she said, "Look," she said, "I can be reelected to Congress, and I love my job. But I'm concerned about my State. How many times do you have good times? And you should do more with good times, not less." And it made a profound impression on me. We sat there and talked. And like I said, this is all very impolitic, what I'm telling you, but you need to know the truth. She knew what she was getting into. And she said, "You should do more with good times, not less. You shouldn't take the easy way out just because times are good, because as a practical matter, when times are good, if you've got the right kind of leadership you can get things done that you can't get done

in tough times. So I'm going to run anyway, and I'm going to do my best to win."

Now, the first thing you need in a Governor is strength of character. Anybody who would take on those odds just because she believes in you and your future and what kind of future your children have deserves serious consideration and support from the Democrats of her State.

Now I want to give you a second reason that you ought to support Barbara Kennelly in this race. Our country is doing pretty well now, and I am gratified beyond measure that in the last 5½ years we have worked hard together and worked with the American people. And we now have the lowest crime rates in 25 years, 16 million jobs and the lowest unemployment in 28 years, the lowest percentage of our people on welfare in 29 years, the first balanced budget and surplus in 29 years, the lowest inflation in 32 years, the smallest Federal Government in 35 years, and the highest homeownership in the history of the United States of America. I'm proud of that. *[Applause]*

What I want to say to you is it didn't happen by accident, and our role in it—that is, our administration and the National Government's role—came after the people voted in 1992 to take a different direction, to move out of this old debate between those that said Government was the problem and would mess up a two-car parade and should go away, and those who said we just want to defend the old status quo Government. We wanted to do something different.

We had a whole different economic philosophy. We thought we could actually reduce the deficit and balance the budget and still invest more in education, in the environment, in health care, and the future of our people if, at the same time, we were expanding trade and creating more markets for American products. That was our strategy. I'd say, on balance, it's worked pretty well.

But it was different. It's important that you know it was different, and it was extremely vulnerable to attack because it was different. And the first big test of the strategy was the vote on our economic plan in 1993. My now-Treasury Secretary, Bob Rubin, who was then my economic adviser, and Lloyd Bentsen, the then-Treasury Secretary, came to me and said, "We have talked to the financial markets; we have talked to Mr. Greenspan; we've talked to all

these people; we believe we'll never get out of this recession unless we take at least \$500 billion off this deficit so we can drive interest rates down and make investments more attractive and free up capital. You've got to do it, and you've got to make some tough decisions. And you're going to have to do some things that are very unpopular."

And we put that economic plan before the Congress. And Barbara Kennelly was in the Congress; so was her opponent. And everything you just clapped for was riding on what we did, because the crime rate is down because of our crime bill, but it wouldn't be down this much if the economy weren't better. The welfare reform rates are down because of welfare reform, but they wouldn't have come down as much if the economy hadn't been better. Everything was riding on it—all of our education initiatives—everything.

It passed by one vote in the House and by one vote in the Senate. If Chris Dodd had said no, if Joe Lieberman had said no, if Rosa DeLauro had said no, and if Barbara Kennelly had said no—just one of them—all those numbers I just read you, that you clapped for, would probably not be on a list that anyone can say today.

Everything was hanging in the balance. And everybody that got up to vote for it knew it was unpopular. Why? Because not a single, solitary member of the other party voted for it. They were terrifying people. They said if the President's economic plan passed, everybody's taxes will go up; the economy will go down; we'll have a terrible recession; the deficit will get bigger.

Everybody's forgotten about all that now. Why have you forgotten? Because they were wrong. *[Laughter]* I have no more elections to run, so I'm not asking you to do anything for me. *[Laughter]* Just once, I'd like to see people really know what happened and reward those who were right, and at least hold accountable those who were wrong.

So you know what happened in the ensuing 5 years. So what happens now? States all over America have more money than they had in a long time. And in 1994, the Republicans went out and told everybody how terrible we were and what an awful thing we had done, how we were going to bankrupt the economy. They won the Congress, and they got a majority of the Governorships, and they were wrong about

everything. And because they were wrong, they've all been reelected ever since because the economy has been good. That's the truth.

Now, I believe when you think about what you're going to do with your prosperity, you have a key decision which helped to bring about your prosperity, and the two people running were on opposite sides—all I can tell you is, when it would have been very easy to walk away, Barbara Kennelly stood up, stayed hitched, and Connecticut and America are better places today because of it. And that's a good reason to vote for her.

Here's the last thing I want to tell you; this is the third reason to vote for Barbara Kennelly and to work for her and to talk to people. And again, I say this having been a Governor for 12 years. I know something about this job. When I read you the laundry list of achievements, I said we had the smallest Federal Government in 35 years. That's true. Part of the reason it's smaller is that we've gotten rid of, for example, two-thirds of the regulations the Department of Education imposed on States for education funds. We say, here's the purpose; you decide the how's. We did a lot of that, because I had been a Governor, and I realized the Federal Government couldn't micromanage all the how's, but I always thought it was legitimate for them to tell me what the money was supposed to be spent on if they sent me the money.

Now, because of the changes we have made and are making now, the next Governor of Connecticut will have unique tools to deal with some of the long-term challenges you face. Connecticut is one of the most interesting States in America. You have overall one of the highest per capita incomes and two or three of the poorest cities. You struggle with trying to build a community of people and bring people together and give everybody opportunity.

Now, in the next 4 years you will have an unprecedented opportunity to do the following things: Because of the Balanced Budget Act passed last year, the next Governor will have an unprecedented opportunity to add children, poor children, to the ranks of those with health insurance because of what Congress—what the Democrats demanded to be a part of that balanced budget plan. So it really matters who the Governor is, because the Governor will decide what are the components of this effort, how will we do this. It matters how important

it is to the Governor. And it matters how much of that kind of experience the Governor has. That's one thing. Children, whether they—often it may be the difference in life or death for them. It certainly may be the difference in how healthy they are.

Secondly, if we pass tobacco legislation to protect our children from the dangers of tobacco, we will be sending back to the States substantial amounts of money. One of the things the States will have to decide to do is how much money to invest in increased child care for working people on modest incomes. This is a huge deal. If you want all the folks in the lower income neighborhoods of the big cities of Connecticut to stay off welfare and go to work, if you want people to work for modest wages even in times when they don't have a lot extra left over at the end of every pay period, and you want them to be successful parents, you want to want your State to do more to help them have affordable, decent child care. Who do you think is more likely to make the right decisions about what kind of child care ordinary families have with their children?

Representative Kennelly. Me! [Laughter]

The President. I'll give you three more examples. I'm going to go back tomorrow—I guess it is—I think it's tomorrow—but sometime in the next few days I'm going to sign the transportation bill. And that transportation bill has a lot of money in it that will go to States to help move people from welfare to work, literally pay the transportation bills. One of the biggest problems we have in getting poor people who are on welfare to go to work is that very often the jobs aren't anywhere they can walk to, and they don't have cars, and they may not be able to afford or even have access to transit. There's a lot in there. So it really matters. If you want the welfare reform to work and you believe that people should work if they can, but you want them to be successful parents, it matters who the Governor is.

And the last thing I can't say enough about is education. Barbara mentioned it. But we still have enormous challenges. She mentioned the Internet. I gave a speech at MIT last Saturday about how we can make sure we make democratic—not party, small “d”—make democratic the gains of the technological revolution. We have to hook up every classroom to the Internet. We have to make sure that all of our children have access to the benefits of the technology

revolution. We have to make sure there are smaller classes in the grades when kids start out, especially if they have—they don't have the support at home that they need.

All these things will matter. So you've got education, welfare, child care, health care. If you do these things right, you can bring Connecticut together; you can lift the State up; you can go forward into the 21st century together. It will matter a lot who the Governor is.

So I can tell you, she's got the strength of character to serve. When the whole future of the country's economy and Connecticut's was riding on the line and we didn't have a vote to spare, she stood right there, toe-to-toe, knowing what a price she could pay. And when you

look at what powers will be there for the Governors in the next 4 years and what you want from Connecticut, I don't think there's much of a question. Barbara Kennelly deserves your support, and I thank you for being here for her today.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:50 p.m. in the studios of the "Martha Stewart Living" home-making television program. In his remarks, he referred to Martha Stewart, host of the reception and the television program; State Democratic Party Chair Ed Marcus; and Gov. John G. Rowland of Connecticut.

Statement on the Resignation of Secretary of the Navy John H. Dalton *June 8, 1998*

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I accept the resignation today of John Dalton as Secretary of the Navy. Whether as a young midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, in his business career, or in the 5 years he led the Navy, John has always been a shining example of the best America has to offer.

During Secretary Dalton's tenure, the Navy and Marine Corps have truly risen to the chal-

lenge of change, while reaffirming the core values that have always defined the Department of the Navy. His business acumen has helped to streamline and strengthen operations, and he has worked ceaselessly to extend opportunity to every sailor and Marine, helping draw strength from our rich diversity.

I thank him for his service, and for his friendship.

Statement on the Supreme Court Decision on Penalties for Drug Traffickers Who Carry Firearms *June 8, 1998*

I applaud the Supreme Court's decision today to make sure that drug traffickers who carry firearms, whether on their person or in their car, are subject to the stiffest penalties possible. Crime rates have fallen in America for 6 years in a row, but guns and drugs remain serious

problems among our youth and in many of our neighborhoods. Today's decision is one more victory for law enforcement and law-abiding citizens in the fight against crime and drugs.